(amended)   In an information input device, the combination of:

a)   means for inputting first information;

b)   means for storing secret key information which is stored in an external device and fed from the[an] external device; and

c)   means for generating a digital signature based upon the first information and the secret key information.

Please amend claim 6 as follows:

6.   (amended)   An information input device comprising:

a)   means for inputting first information;

b)   means for compressing said first information;

c)   means for storing secret key information which is stored in an external device and fed from the [an] external device; and

d)   means for generating a distinguishing information based on the secret information and the information compressed by said compressing means,

wherein said external device stores the secret key corresponding to a registered user.

Please amend claim 10 as follows:

10.   (amended)   An image input apparatus comprising:

a)   an image input device for inputting said image data:

b)   a memory for storing secret information which is stored in an external device and fed from the[an] external device; and

c)   an operation device for carrying out an operation using the image data and the secret information.

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Please amend claim 14 as follows:

14. (amended) An image input system comprising:

a) a first terminal device for inputting image data;

b) a second terminal device for having a memory for storing secret information which is corresponding[corresponds] to a user; and

c) an operator[a processor] for executing a command based on an algorithm for generating a digital signature by using the image data and the secret information.

Please amend claim 26 as follows:

26. (amended) An information input method comprising:

a) a step of inputting first information;

b) a step of storing secret key information which is stored in an external device and fed from the[an] external device; and

c) a step of generating a digital signature based upon the first information and the secret key information.

(Please amend claim 27 as follows:]

27. (amended) A computer readable memory which cooperates with a data processor and an information input unit to carry out:

(a) a step of inputting first information;

(b) a step of storing secret key information which is stored in an external device and fed from the[an] external device; and

(c) step for generating a digital signature based upon the first information and the secret key information.

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